



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE PROPOSED UNIFORM GRAMMATICAL NOMENCLATURE: A CRITICISM

OLIN DANTZLER WANNAMAKER

Alabama Polytechnic Institute, Auburn, Alabama

Earnest thanks from all teachers of English are due to the Joint Committee on Nomenclature for its comprehensive and excellent report. That body of faithful servants, however, even after the expenditure of ten talents per member upon their task, expected, no doubt, to receive, not the commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant," but, on the contrary, very general criticism; for it is only through our criticism that they shall be able to learn our misapprehensions and set us right. This consideration partly, but lack of time mainly, prevents me from including favorable comment in this paper and limits me to the unpleasant task of adverse remark. That these remarks may be intelligible in the very concise form I am compelled to adopt, I have arranged them almost entirely as a simple running commentary on the report.

Nouns.—A tabular scheme best shows the natural classification of nouns:

Common	{ Concrete	{ Individual: <i>man</i>
		{ Collective: <i>crowd</i>
	{ Abstract.....	<i>manliness</i>
Proper.....	{	Individual: <i>Johnson</i>
		Collective: <i>Johnson & Co.</i>

The report omits the terms "individual" and "concrete," the inclusion of which would not only render the acquisition of the respective antonyms easier and more certain, but would also furnish an object-lesson in proper analysis—analysis consisting in the discovery of the natural lines of cleavage in any object of thought. The omission of these terms makes the impression that abstract and collective nouns are peculiar and exceptional, as, indeed, they are classed by some grammars. This is logically

vicious, for needless special groups and exceptional cases vitiate any system.

Certainly gender should receive no emphasis in English grammar, but it can be passed over lightly and rapidly without the partial violation proposed by the Committee of that excellent rule of common-sense whereby in English gender coincides with sex. The exclusion of the term "common gender" forces us to classify nouns naming groups of animals consisting of both sexes as neuter nouns and those naming animals without indicating their sex also as neuter. This means that to the mind of the pupil grammar is in collision with life, for he very well knows that dogs, cats, and rabbits are either male or female, not sexless or neuter. What more natural than to employ the term "common" for the instances mentioned above, just as this term applies to nouns that are not the proper names of a single individual and to case-forms that are used for more than one case?

Pronouns.—It is true that "most pronominal words have either a substantive or an adjective use," but to recommend that they be called pronouns or pronominal adjectives according to use in the sentence is counsel with misleading implications. First, it is hardly scientific to use a compound name for any element in the sentence except when that element combines the functions of two ordinary elements. "Verbal noun" is justifiable, because that element in the sentence is both verbal and substantive, but in the expression "that horse" the word "that" has absolutely no pronominal force; pronouns take the place left vacant by the noun, but in this instance the noun itself is used. In like manner it seems poor policy to use the terms "subject substantive" and "predicate verb," for the reason that we thereby combine two things that must be constantly separated—the word and its function in the sentence. Far better to call these elements the "essential subject" and "essential predicate." Especially evident does this appear when the subject is a clause.

But the use of the term "pronominal adjective" is not the principal objection to this part of the report. The advice that we name pronominal words according to use implies an ignoring of one of the fundamental principles that must be insisted upon from

the beginning in the teaching of English grammar: the principle that the classification of all words depends absolutely upon their use in the sentence. Strictly speaking, no word can be classified in English except as it is used in some sentence. This principle is of the greatest pedagogical value. It distinguishes the pedagogical usefulness of English grammar from that of Latin. The study of Latin teaches close observation and begets logical habits of expression, since the pupil is constantly watching for differences of form which coincide with differences of relationship. But the study of English drills the pupil in penetrating analysis, for he must analyze thought expressed in sentences almost devoid of brands and stamps of form. Therefore, not only pronominal words, but all words, must be named according to their use. The origin of words must not determine their classification for immature grammar pupils.

On the same basis of origin and analogy with German, the forms "my," "thy," "his," and the like are called by the Committee "possessive adjectives" when they modify substantives and "possessive pronouns" when used alone. This runs counter to the Committee's decision against the term "possessive" for the case in declension on the ground that this case so frequently denotes relationships other than possession. The pronominal forms are even more frequent in such uses than are noun forms, and must not, therefore, be called possessive forms. Shall we carry uniformity and historical principles to their ultimate extreme and name these forms "genitive pronouns" and "genitive adjectives"? Surely not. Forget historical grammar and take the point of view of the ignorant grammar pupil. You will observe that these twofold forms correspond in use identically with the twofold use of the genitive case, which is either adjectival or substantive: "This is John's hat"; "This hat is John's"; "This is my hat"; "This hat is mine." Why, then, not restore them to their ancient haunts among the paradigms, and name them "genitive case-forms" of the personal pronouns?

Adjectives.—The classification of adjectives as "descriptive" and "limiting," and of clauses as "descriptive" and "determinative," by the Committee is scarcely consistent, for a single set of

terms will apply to all adjective modifiers as used in the sentence, and, moreover, the pairs of terms proposed become misleading as soon as an adjective is used in a sentence. "Red" is a descriptive adjective, but its purpose is merely limiting or determinative in the sentence, "I referred to the *red* book." No couplet of terms will distinguish adjectives as to their inherent nature except the couplet "descriptive" and "not descriptive," the second member of the couplet covering numerous subdivisions. But I am not greatly interested in naming adjectives in the dictionary. The vital matter is to name their use. The following sentences will show that, no matter what the inherent nature of the adjective modifier, and no matter what its position, every adjective modifier is in use either "determinative" or "assertive," either merely determines the application of its substantive or else furnishes in a neat and compact form a fact about that substantive.

Determinative:

1. I like *black* horses.
2. The boy *most blameworthy* is William.
3. The child *in the street* is my little son.
4. The boy *sitting* is the brother of the one *standing by his side*.
5. The fowls *that I bought yesterday* were Leghorns.

Assertive:

6. *Dear* child, what do you mean?
7. *Patriotic* Washington was ready for any sacrifice.
8. Mary, *red* and *furious*, left the room.
9. She rose from her seat, *trembling* and *confused*.
10. The robbers, *three* in number, overpowered us.
11. *In the midst of a campaign*, he yet remembered his old mother.
12. *Sitting at my window*, I watched the people pass.
13. Jane, *who had violently opposed woman's suffrage*, now favored it.

While the terms "essential" and "unessential" might be used instead of "determinative" and "assertive," we should not thus characterize the use of the modifier, but merely indicate the closeness of its attachment to the substantive. Moreover, the term "assertive" opens the way to show the pupil that participles, which often scarcely appear to modify substantives, do really modify in the same manner as adjectives. It also renders evident the fact that every sort of adjective modifier—not only clauses, as

grammars usually teach—may express cause, concession, circumstance, and the like. Of course, any adjective modifier thus used is assertive.

Co-ordinate:

Charming and talented Mrs. Wilson was the hostess.

Running down the steps, the child came to meet us.

Jones, *whom I have known for some time*, has purchased a lot next to mine.

Circumstantial:

Alone at the window, she waved us goodbye.

Asleep or awake, we are the victims of chance.

He gazed back at the station, *fast disappearing*.

The house, *which stood far back from the road*, at length became visible.

Causal:

Heartsick and hopeless, she refused to go farther.

Struck by a shell, the soldier fell in a heap.

The manager, *who had carried the team through to victory*, was given a loving-cup.

Concessive:

Defeated, he was not disheartened.

Aflame with ambition, she kept her head cool.

Jane, *red-nosed and ugly*, is yet the favorite of her class.

Having failed in three attempts, the boy came forward for a fourth.

Will, *who had never known discouragement*, was ready to give up.

"Truth, *crushed to earth*, will rise again."

Conditional:

Once outflanked, we are lost.

To embrace all these uses of the adjective, the definition must be more comprehensive than that used in many grammars. It requires the use of some term like "modify," which must then be interpreted so as to include the assertive function.

Infinitive and participle.—The infinitive is fully as common in an adverbial use as in a substantive use. It is, therefore, illogical to call it a substantive, for this renders all its other uses apparently abnormal. The present habit of the language, and not ancient history, must determine the selection of terms. The infinitive should be called either a "non-modal form of the verb," or—as I prefer—a "verbal," and it may serve as substantive, adjective, adverb, or even as the essential predicate of a sort of clause.

The Committee objects to the terms "perfect infinitive" and "perfect participle," yet in form these infinitives and participles correspond with the perfect tense and in use they are surely at

least as nearly like the perfect as the past. What is gained by dropping the terms? This seems false economy.

"*Compound*" and "*phrase*."—To be consistent the term "compound" should be applied only to single elements of the sentence which consist of two or more co-ordinate parts. It is thus used in "compound subject," "compound predicate," and "compound sentence." The term "phrase," on the other hand, best applies to a single element consisting of parts not co-ordinate, like "prepositional phrase," "participial phrase." Now there are elements consisting of groups of words temporarily associated and taking the place of a single part of speech, and other elements consisting of groups permanently adhering together and no longer merely serving for a part of speech, but actually being a part of speech. These two sorts should be distinguished, the permanent groups being called by the name of the appropriate part of speech with the term "phrase" prefixed and hyphenated, and the temporary groups by the name "phrase" with the name of the appropriate part of speech prefixed. I think the Committee inadvertently calls "in spite of" a "compound preposition."

Phrase-noun: Tarrytown-on-Hudson.

Phrase-verb: may be coming.

Phrase-pronoun: each other.

Phrase-adjective: long-legged.

Phrase-adverb: helter-skelter.

Phrase-preposition: on account of.

Phrase-conjunction: in order that.

Phrase-interjection: Ah me!

Sentence-forms.—Can we get along with two sentence forms, declarative and interrogative? The lazy boy with his heart on the swimming-hole and one eye following the gyrations of a blue fly can glance with the other at the rear of the sentence and name it according as it is followed by a dot or a curly tail. For practical disciplinary purposes, give us back our three forms. They mark three thought-states: the inquiring state, the opinion state, and the willing state. What if their boundaries get confused? So do those of the Balkan allies, but no one of them has for that reason been completely absorbed. That the term "imperative" is used to designate the mood may constitute a legitimate objection to its use here. If so, a new term must be coined to take its place.

Yet we ought, perhaps, to be content with the sacrifice of the term "imperative," for the Committee has presented us in the new coinage "non-exclamatory" a mouth-filling and heart-satisfying name. Sentences are classified as "affirmative" and "negative," "declarative" and "interrogative," and "exclamatory" and "non-exclamatory." This subtle suggestion that normal and properly behaved sentences are of the exclamatory sort may increase the shower of exclamation points in the next letters we receive from our young lady correspondents. Indeed, the term is surely not required and is even misleading. "Exclamatory" means uttered, or to be uttered, with strong feeling. The term, therefore, does not rest upon a distinction in thought-state. Any sentence may be made exclamatory. To divide all into exclamatory and non-exclamatory is like classing men as drunk men and non-drunk men.

Complement.—The Committee objects to the term "complement" on the ground that in grammar so many things serve to "fill out" other things. In the sentence, "He believes me to be the author," we are advised to call author the "predicate" of the infinitive. Now, philosophically this may be sound, but practically a substantive or adjective should surely never be called the predicate of a verb form. What clearer or fitter term than "complement" in instances where the verb only partially expresses the thought: "He grew impatient"; "The person seems a gentleman"; "Jones turned Republican"? And what term better fits the infinitives in sentences like the following: "I used to believe that"; "He appears to think so"; "I am going to write you"?

Subjunctive.—The only condition included by the Committee among the mood ideas expressed by the subjunctive mood-forms is the condition contrary to fact. The Committee is not prepared to say whether there is any difference between the two sentences, "If this is true, I am sorry," and "If this be true, I am sorry." All who believe in conserving every shade of expression of which our amazing language is capable should come to the rescue of the belittled subjunctive. When Patrick Henry uttered his famous challenge, "If this be treason, make the most of it," the form "be" may have been in common use as an alternative for the forms "is," "am," "are," etc. But if that challenge were uttered by a congressman of the present day it would imply strongly the belief

that this is not treason. The indicative in conditions ranges from what is practically assertion, where "if" is equivalent to "since," to neutral conditions in which the speaker gives no hint of his opinion. The subjunctive ranges from a hint that the speaker does not assume the truth of the condition, through a strong suggestion of doubt, to complete denial.

Assertion: If all men are mortal, let us remember death.

Neutral condition: If it is raining, I will not go.

Declining to assume the truth: If he be here, we shall find him.

Suggesting doubt: If this be as you say, why have you not reported it?

Unreality: If he were here, he would make it known.

Conjugation.—The Committee uses the terms "regular" and "irregular conjugation" and then the term "progressive conjugation." Regularity and irregularity are fixed characteristics distinguishing two groups of verbs; progressiveness is a subordinate property of any verb when conjugated in a certain manner. Is it not better to say "regular verb" and "irregular verb" and "progressive conjugation"?

Assumptive clause.—What is gained by substituting this very hard name for both "concessive" and "conditional" clauses?

The present passive participle.—The Committee states that the present passive participle is often used with past force and gives this example: "The dispatch being written, he rang for a messenger." Surely this is not an instance of the present passive participle, but is the present participle of "be" followed by the participle "written" used as a complement—if the Committee will allow us so to name it. Contrast these two instances: "The task now being finished will complete the day's work." "The task being finished, we closed our desks." The first is a present passive participle, the second a present participle followed by a participle used as a complement.

It might, perhaps, have been better to issue proposals before adopting a report and putting it before the public. There will now be a crop of new grammars to meet the demand for the new terminology, and, in case this nomenclature undergoes considerable alteration during the next two years, this will involve again a new harvest of grammars and a great waste of paper and printer's ink, not to mention patience and pedagogical upsetting.